

## Variant Circus

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Summary: Variant Circus is an adult-themed circus where the Variants-variations of the common man-can come together as a small little family of freaks and perform without fear. But the circus is beginning to suffer, from money issues and maintenance to quarrels within the small group. When the newly-arrived lion tamer steps in, saving the circus isn't the only thing on Waylon's mind.

## Variant Circus

A steady breath was let out into the darkness. Even though he had been performing for years, Waylon always got a little nervous before every show. The stars seemed to twinkle their wishes of good luck and safety as they shone above the big top. Waylon's brown eyes fluttered shut as he absorbed their cosmic message.

Waylon's grip on his baton tightened in anticipation. The crowd was waiting. The crew was counting on him. With one more deep breath for comfort, Waylon was ready. It was showtime.

With a flourish of the curtains, the ringmaster became visible to the crowd with raised hands. The cheering became deafening as if they were concert fans, and Waylon couldn't help but grin when he noticed a good number of the patrons-male and female-shifting uncomfortably. He was dressed in a sparkly black leotard that hugged his frame, black stockings that accented his long legs, and black ballet slippers. A black top hat rested atop his mop of blonde hair, one red ribbon encircling above the rim, and he held a black baton in his right hand.

He looked fucking gorgeous.

"Welcome to Variant Circus!"

Variant Circus was strictly for adults. It included many of the

attractions expected of a traditional circus, but with a distinctly burlesque flavor that was definitely for adults only. It was the brain-child of Rudolf Wernicke, the creator and owner of the circus, and had been in operation for twenty years. Originating in Boulder, Colorado, the circus was famous for its attractive male performers, sex appeal, and all-around dedication to showing the audience a good time.

Waylon loved the spotlight and the attention, but when the curtain went up, it was not about him. The patrons paid for a show, and that was what they were going to get.

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. I'm Waylon, and I am the ringmaster, the overseer of these seductive acts, the host of this one-of-a-kind entertainment, and the orchestrator of your desire. Here at Variant Circus, satisfaction is our goal-whichever type you're looking for. The pounding of your heart will become the pulsing of your lower regions, the slight increase in room temperature will become fire in your veins, and a simple collection of superhuman feats will become your drug. Hope you all brought something cold to drink; you're gonna need it. Without further ado, introducing our first act of the night, the magician Tragic the Great!"

As Waylon and Trager traded places, all eyes were on Trager in that moment. His light gray top hat was rumored to be the source of his power, but other whispers said that he was blessed with magic powers.

Trager tilted his head slightly, his long, stark white hair sliding in relation to the angle. "How's everyone doin' tonight?"

He heard shouts ranging from 'good' to 'dizzy' to 'excited', and one 'sexually frustrated'.

"Goodness," he chuckled, placing his hands on his hips. "Well, you all made a good choice coming here, one thing you'll never feel is 'bored'." He removed his hat and held it out, revealing the seemingly abyssmal interior. The slow clunk of his ankle boots on the floor was the only sound amid the breathing of the anticipating patrons as he rounded the ring, allowing each pair of eyes to glance inside his magical headgear.

"Now," Trager began once he completed his walkaround, "I know we have some clergy members in the audience tonight, wherever they might be hiding, and I want to get one thing straight before we begin."

His hand disappeared into his upturned hat, face scrunching as if he was searching for something in particular, then lighting up once he had found it. In his hand was a vibrator, in a smoky gray color.

"Us performers, we're a little different from everyone else. Variations of the common man, or Variants, if you will. And it's very common for people to make assumptions based on what they see or what they know. It can't be helped, it's almost like a reflex. And that's why I want to say this. Now, I know homosexuality is quite...frowned upon in our society, but I hope you don't think you can confuse us with your holier-than-thou Bible thumping, because that just pisses people off."

There was a small wave of laughter amongst the crowd.

"No offense to the church or anything, but I just think some of you are a little...crazy. Last time I checked, God died with the gold standard and we've moved on to more concrete faith now. But don't bother leaving now, nobody likes a quitter. Let me...sell you...the dream."

With the hand that wasn't rolling a sex toy between its fingers, Trager pushed his glasses up to the bridge of his nose with the back of that hand, then freed it by placing his hat atop his head once more. His occupied hand then blindly threw the vibrator in some random direction of the audience. This was how he selected his volunteers.

The toy flew like a birdie, landing in the lap of a messy-haired drunk. The man wasn't sure when it had started raining dark round objects, but he was curious about his new present nonetheless. Just as he picked it up to examine it, Trager promptly snapped his fingers and beckoned the man closer with a finger. "You. Come on down, buddy. We've got a lot of work to do."

It took the help of the man's blonde female friend to keep him from falling and receiving a concussion, and once he was planted beside Trager, she scurried back up to her seat.

"So what's your name, buddy?" the magician asked, examining his own boots casually.

"John," the man replied.

"John..." Trager repeated the name, rolling it on his tongue. "Nice to meet you, John. Think you can help me out with my little act here?"

Trager wasn't sure how drunk this guy was, but judging by his stupid grin and enthusiastic nod, he was definitely far from sober.

"Great, So you see that vibrator in your hands?"

John's expression fell into confusion. He held up the dark round object in his palm.

"You mean my present?"

"That's right. I want you to put that present inside my hat."

John's brown eyes blinked owlishly. "...Inside your ass?"

Trager perked up in surprise as rose pink splashed his cheeks. "No! My hat!"

"Ohhhh." The drunkard seemed to catch on and placed the toy within the shadowy depths of Trager's hat. Satisfied, Trager loomed over it, peering into its interior. He began to mutter to himself, as if repeating an incantation to activate his sorcery. Few could catch a word or two here and there, but it was eventually declared that the magician was not speaking English and all attempts to make sense of his words were dropped.

Once his spell was completed, Trager flipped his hat over so the brim was facing the ground. There were several gasps of awe when the audience noticed that nothing was falling out. It was as if the vibrator had vanished!

"Where'd it go?" he asked obliviously, tapping his chin as he returned his hat to his head.

John was dumbstruck. His shoulders raised lazily and dropped back to their neutral position like dead weights in a halfhearted shrug.

Reaching into his pocket, Trager pulled out the exact same vibrator that had magically disappeared into the depths of his hat...

...or had he?

"I know what you're thinking: all he did was pull a replica out of his pocket. And maybe, I did. But then again, maybe I didn't. Maybe I sent the first one to the realm of shadows, to my friends on the other side, and in that case, this is a replica. But maybe I just used a teleportation spell and this is the very same vibrator that John here dropped into my hat."

Voices began to murmur in speculation of which one it was. One man yelled out, "So which one is it?"

Trager responded with a chuckle. "A magician never reveals his secrets." He tossed the vibrator to John, who somehow managed to catch it. "Here, you can keep that for yourself. Consider it a souvenir. Or a gift for when the wife's not home."

The applause was instantaneous as Trager began to make his way backstage. Waylon was quick on his feet, taking long strides towards the center stage and marking his appearance with an elegant flourish coupled with a bright grin.

"How was that?" Another bout of cheering was the crowd's response. Waylon's grin hadn't faltered.

"Great to hear that! Sometimes Trager's tricks are a little weird, but we'll always have you sick fucks around to support him and the rest of us."

The next act was the power lifter, Chris Monsterfist. Waylon finished the introduction with his baton raised before hurrying back behind the curtains. He dabbed sweat from his brow and grabbed a drink of water before peeking to make sure Chris was hitting his marks. The muscular man was lifting an impossibly huge barbell over his head with two fingers without breaking a sweat.

Even though Chris was doing fine and dandy, Waylon could only hope he got a response from the name he was about to call.

"Miles!"

...Nothing. Well, you can't blame a guy for hoping.

The ringmaster began to nibble at his glossed lip with a whine,

detesting the nervous habit but unable to break it. Chris had one of the shorter acts, and the acrobats were up after him. But there needed to be all four, not just two!

Oh well. The show had to go on.

"Dennis! Are you ready yet? I need your help with something!" Waylon called, noticing the sword swallower was fiddling with his bangs with the point of a sword.

"Y-Yeah, I'm ready!" Dennis scrambled to collect his swords and hold them against his chest without cutting through his shirt, then ran to Waylon's side like an obedient dog. "But wait, I thought the acrobats were after Chris."

"Two of the acrobats are missing in action," Waylon grumbled, planning to kick both of their asses when he found them.

Dennis pouted a little. "So we're skipping the acrobats completely?"

Waylon crossed his arms. "No, we'll just only have two instead of four. I need your help getting the Twins into their tights. They usually have issues with their tights."

"But what about-"

"Den, this is the fifth time those two have been late, and I've been meaning to speak to them about it, but they should know better. I don't This is really pushi-"

"Wait!" a voice called, followed by heavy breathing and footfalls. Waylon and Dennis turned to identify the owner, and saw Miles running towards them with Billy in tow.

"Sorry...we're late...Waylon. I was...doing...stuff," Miles explained between breaths.

"Miles Upshur, you're lucky we're best friends or your ass would be out on the street! This is the third time you've been late this week, and the fifth time you've been late overall! Now what 'stuff' were you doing that was so much more important than being on time for your own act?"

"Billy." Miles placed an arm around Billy's shoulders. "Billy was the stuff."

"So you were doing Billy?" Dennis asked for clarification.

"Yes."

"Of course," Waylon muttered, rolling his eyes. "Gotta add that to the list of bullshit excuses you've given me. Get into costume while Dennis and I help the Twins."

The two pairs got right to their respective jobs, Waylon was helping Kei, the oldest twin, pull his fluorescent pink tights up as far as they could go over his hipbones without putting a run in them. The acrobats didn't wear shoes, so Waylon stood up and admired his

handiwork, brushing off the spiffy navy blue leotard and adjusting Kei's cuffed collar.

Dennis was doing the same for Kio, the younger twin. It was nigh-impossible to differentiate the Twins asthetically or vocally, but Kio always wore a golden heart locket given to him by Kei for his birthday, and tended to be a little shyer than his older brother.

When Chris completed his act, the acrobats were ready. There were colored spotlights and upbeat music. The audience was laughing and squealing, phone cameras flashed and Waylon was more than positive that he was hearing moaning from somewhere in the crowd. The acrobats knew how to 'come in like wrecking balls', as Miles had put it, atop their swings. Despite Miles and Billy's constant lateness, the ringmaster had to hand it to them: the acrobats were a well-loved act. They knew how to rile someone up and leave them breathless.

After the acrobats, the last act of the night was Dennis. Waylon ended the show with thanks and good night wishes. When the big top was empty, Waylon trudged to his small bedroom in the back and flopped onto his bed. He didn't bother changing out of his ringmaster attire or pulling back the covers.

He was just about to drift off into the warm darkness of sleep when a knock at his door creased his eyebrows in irritation.

"Hmm?" he grunted, not moving or opening his eyes.

The door creaked open, revealing Trager, hat gone and blazer unbuttoned. "Sorry, buddy, don't mean to disturb you. Blaire just wanted me to let you know that the new lion tamer just arrived."

It took a moment for Waylon's brain to process Trager's words. The new lion tamer? He was here? What took him so long?

...Well, that could easily be found out. At least he was finally here.

"Thanks, Trager. I'll find him in the morning."

"No problem. Want me to turn your nightlight on for you?"

A yawn. "That'd be great, thanks."

Waylon heard the click of his nightlight being switched on and Trager's socked feet padding back to the doorway.

"Goodnight, Waylon. We're all gonna be okay. Just remember that."

The door shut softly, and Waylon was left to stare at the wall in the dimly lit darkness, fleeting thoughts of the new lion tamer in his brain. What was he like? What did he look like? He had to be attractive if Jeremy had accepted him into the circus.

Hopefully he had what it took to help keep Waylon's little family of freaks from falling apart.

End  
file.